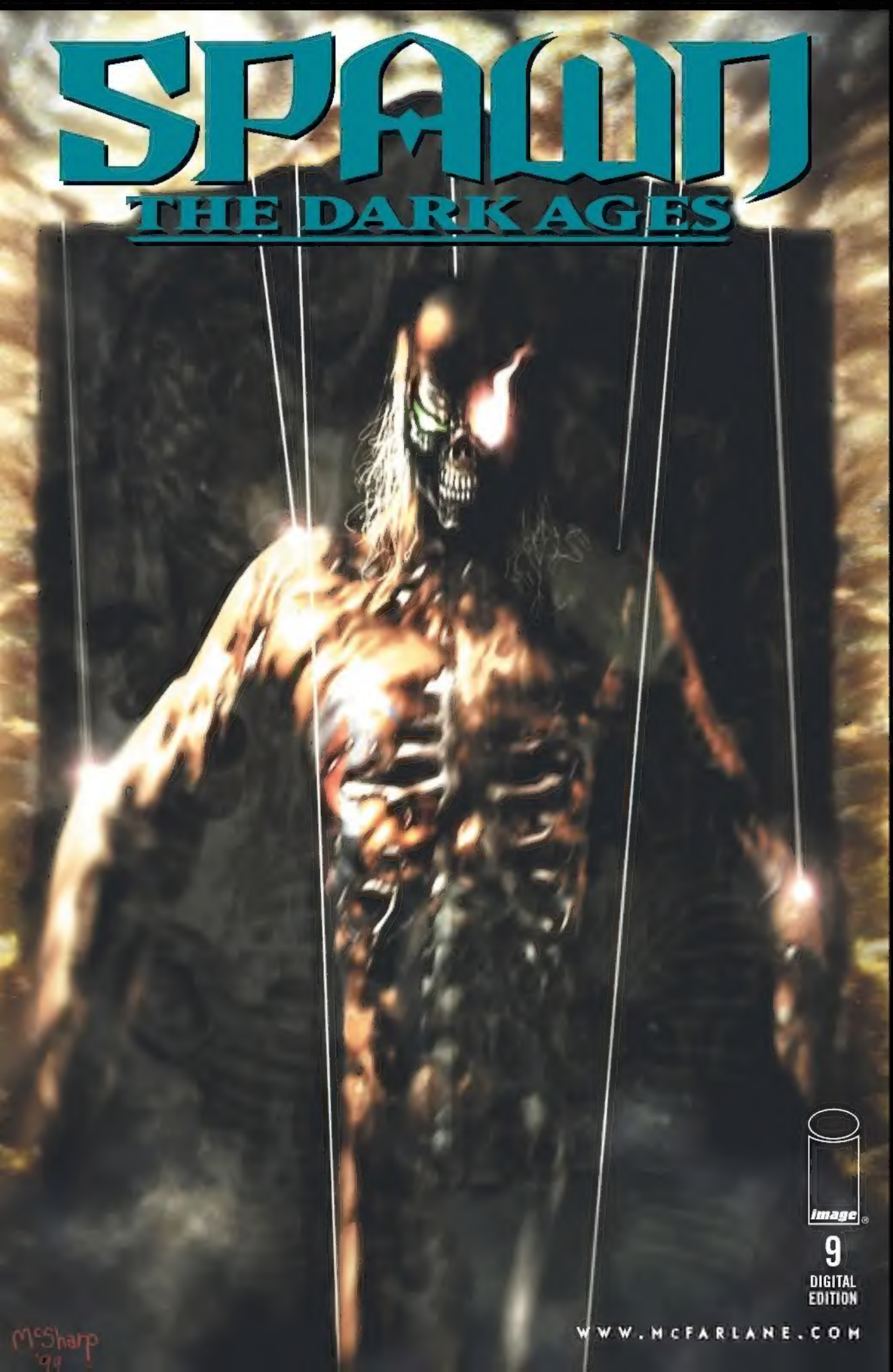
SPAWN
THE DARK AGES
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DIGITAL EDITION
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Todd McFarlane & Image Comics Present

A Child's Crusade Prologue

A Merry Round Of Cheer

Dedicated to Joseph Campbell

STORY
Brian Holguin

ART & COVER
Liam McCormack-Sharp

LETTERING
Richard Starkings
and Comicraft's
Oscar Gongora

COLOR
Brian Haberlin
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SPAWN created by Todd McFarlane

EDITORIAL NOTE: In last month's issue, we failed to credit Danny Miki for the fine job he did in assisting Liam in inking the book. Our apologies to Danny, along with our thanks for helping out.

SPAWN DARK AGES 8 SUMMARY:

Covenant faces Immaculata, the assassin angel. Although confused by Covenant's inaction, Immaculata is determined to engage the HellSpawn in battle. While taunting Covenant, Immaculata sees flames in the distance, and they both realize the Abbey is burning. The fire, started by DuBlanc, threatens to consume the Abbey and its inhabitants, including Reynard's wife and child. Both Immaculata and Covenant enter the burning Abbey. Immaculata finds Reynard's child and gives it to Covenant to save, while she remains inside to perish at the hands of Cogliostro.

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TODD McFARLANE PRODUCTIONS

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Rye, England. The Maiden Head Tavern.
It is a night of revels, an evening of merriment and cheer. Tonight, the Players have come to town.
Loud, boisterous, and more than a little drunk, it is a motley crowd gathered here: Sailors, soldiers, and merchants. Pilgrims en route to Canterbury...
But one figure moves through the crowd with solemn stride: The Hellspawn.
There is a... performance this eve?
Aye, sir. 'The Sad Tragical Story of Maeve the Innocent.' Tuppence a head, if you please.
And... perhaps... Milord would be happy seated in the back... away from the rabble as it were.

A fine crowd! A very fine crowd indeed, old boy.
How is Osling? Has he learnt his line?
Lines?! Phah! Who cares? Let him strut around like a yardcock and give them something to hiss at.
'The Sad Tragical Story of Maeve the Innocent.' The mere words make his heart weigh heavy. Who knew the tale would live so long, grow so great in scope?
That she would be so well remembered and his part in the matter be long forgotten. But it is better that way.
Lord Covenant was a man once, but that was many lifetimes ago. The dust of a hundred years clings to his mantle. But, some things can still move him to tears.
Do you know the tale, friend?
Eh?
The tale. Do you know it? Maeve the Innocent? My grandfather told me stories about her when I was but a lad. Tales of her bravery, and how she was finally betrayed.
My name is Goodson, by the way. I say, I hope they have a grand strumpet to play the girl, don't you?
I mean for a Tuppence we don't want to be looking at a hag all evening, am I right? Ha! They are about to start...

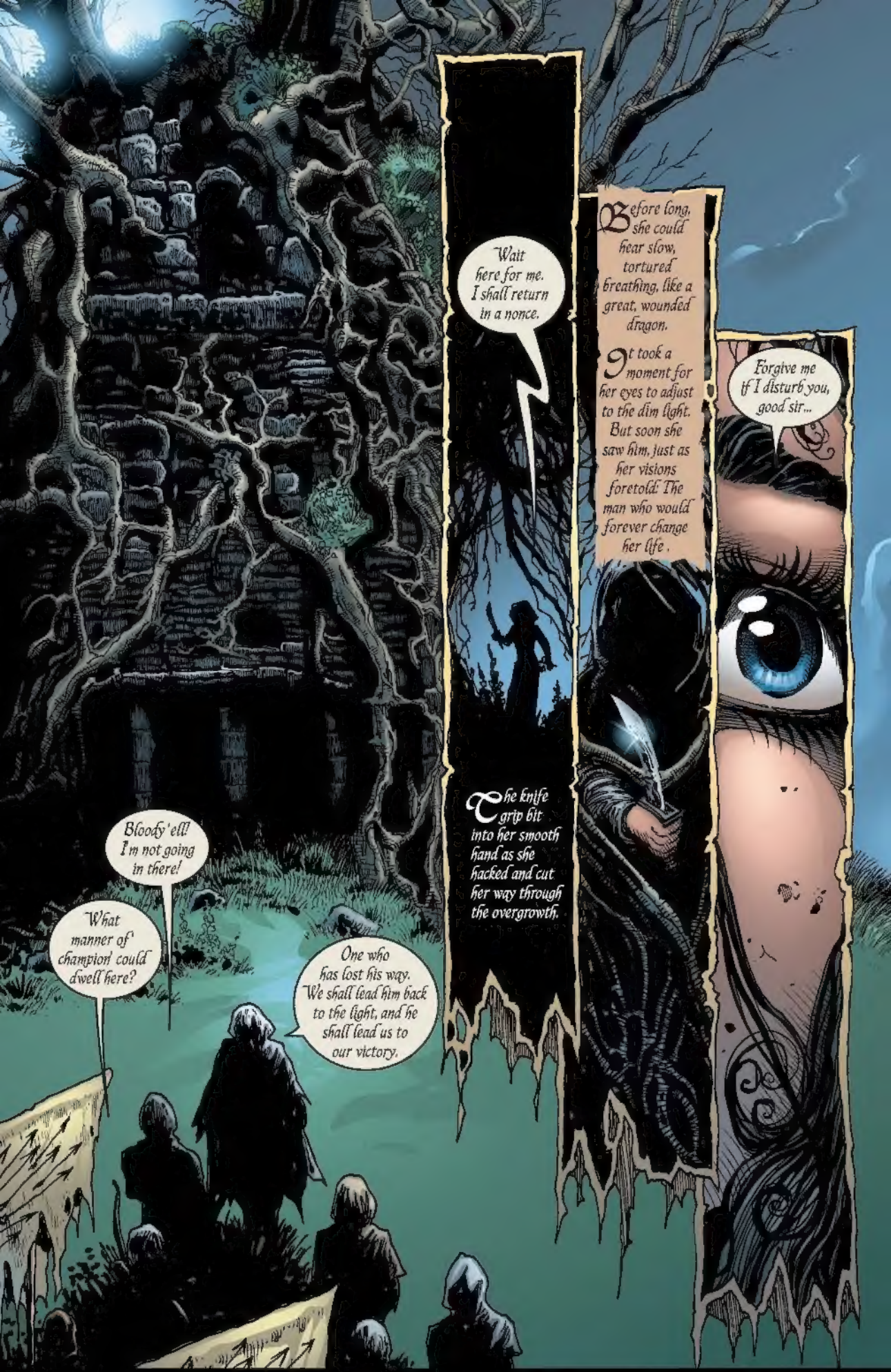
Welcome friends, both old and new, And warmest greetings extend to you, This tale told is old, but true. Of brave fair Maeve and her retinue.
The bloody fields where heroes fell... The haunted caves of Tintagel... The Devil's Closet in darkest Hell... This humble stage shall stand for all!
We bid you now, please lend an ear, While into misty past we peer If you should find our off'rings dear -- Pass the glass and shout 'Here! Here!'
Let us raise a Merry Round of Cheer!
Huzzah!
Huzzah!
Huzzah!

Behold! The young maiden Maeve! A fetching fawn, in the first full flower of youth. A beauty, is she not? Aye, but no more than a child, scarce three and ten!
In child-like frolic she has stumbled upon a doleful sight! Blood and bile of her kin, spilt upon fields of clover!
But hark! One of the slain speaks...
Meave... is that you child?
Father!
He whispers words to her that we are not privileged to hear. On that dark and despised day, sweet maiden Maeve's childhood is swept away...'

...And her doom is sealed!
By the blood of my father and my fallen kin, I shall bear their standard and avenge their fate! By the wounds of our Saviour I swear it!
You can raise my standard, luv!
Bollocks!
Shew us yer teats!

"What say you, friend? Do you not enjoy the play? She is an sample young thing, you must admit!
It is a mockery. An offense to a poor lost child who deserves better than this... this drivel!
But it is an historical production, friend. "Well researched and documented, I understand. They could not portray it thus if it were not so.
Because I was there.
"What makes you think they are making mock?
"Sigh" Why do I also have to sit next to the loon? Right bleeder. 'I was there.' Humph. A hundred odd years ago? Not bloody likely.
God has charged me with a Holy Quest. Our fathers thus slain, it has fall'n upon our shoulders to avenge their ghosts. I shall make an army out of you.
But how? What chance have we?
I will show you.
Peter, take this arrow and snap it in two.
Now... take this bundle and do the same.
Ughh! I cannot!
Hah!
"We shall be as these arrows. Apart, we are fragile. Together we shall not be broken. This is the message that God has sent me.
'God has sent me...' The words wound him like a knife.

It was so long ago. She was a just a ragged little girl, leading a ragged little band of children.
They were babes in the woods, playing dress up and following the vaguest of causes.
But when Maeve spoke, the children listened. She told them of the words that filled her head when she closed her eyes, and of the light of a thousand candles that poured into her brain.
She told them what God had told her.
Where are we going, Maeve?
To find someone to train us, so that we may do God's work. To find a champion.
I see no market for heroes around here.
He is near. When I close my eyes, I see the way.


Wait here for me. I shall return in a nonce.
Before long, she could hear slow, tortured breathing, like a great, wounded dragon.
It took a moment for her eyes to adjust to the dim light. But soon she saw him, just as her visions foretold. The man who would forever change her life.
Forgive me if I disturb you, good sir...
The knife grip bit into her smooth hand as she hacked and cut her way through the overgrowth.
Bloody 'ell! I'm not going in there!
What manner of champion could dwell here?
One who has lost his way. We shall lead him back to the light, and he shall lead us to our victory.

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"But God has sent me to fetch you"

Who.. who.. are you?
His throat aches, parched and split and ringed with dust. How long has it been since he has spoken, since he has seen sunlight?
Years certainly. Decades perhaps. All that time, bound to unforgiving rock like prometheus of old. Unable to die, unwilling to use his hellborne powers to free himself
His own private purgatory, a fool's penance offered up to an unblinking God
I am called Maeve, good sir. The lord has led me to you, so that you may aid me in my quest.

I am afraid you are mistaken, child. God has no kind uses for me, of that I am certain.
But he has. He comes to me in dreams. He told me where to find you. You are to join my cause and in exchange, God will grant you salvation.
We have much to speak about. But first, we must get you down from there
And for the first time in his dark existence, the Hellspawn allows the faintest flicker of hope to grow inside him.

Such a long time ago. And now, this travesty...
Aaaagh!
Aaaieee!
Brilliant!
Take that, ye bugger!
Hah!
More!
More!
More!
Right in the eye!

It goes well, it goes very well! I believe we have scored a 'hit.'
A lot of action, a bit of proud speech thrown in -- That's what they like. Could stand a little more blood, don't you think?
Well, yes. They could all use more blood.
Well played, William. A death worthy of achilles.
Thank you, Fox. You were brilliant as well.
Ah... Osling is ready for his turn. Have you learnt your lines Osling!
Bugger off! You'll make me forget As such traffic... um... betwixt day and night.. uh... such as traffics betwixt day and night... damn it!

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They laugh at these little pantomimes of war. But the do not know the truth.
They do not understand the bloody spectacle of real battle.
The sound of steal plunging in flesh, of bones snapping and great men wailing in agony.
The fetid stench of death that can never be washed away, but lingers, like a ghost, forever.
A man who has known war sees the world with different eyes.
He understands the madness that it brings.
How it turns the world upside down... pitches friend against friend... brother against brother...
...teacher against pupil

This is madness, Cogliostro. I will not abide it. Call off this nonsense before it is too late.
If you don't like it, you are free to walk away, Covenant. Go back and hide in your cave and wait till doomsday.
But the sun rises and sets even without you, my friend.
Why are you doing this?
Because I can.
urk!

I can end this now. I can snap your ancient neck like kindling. Where would you be then, "friend"?
you -- ugh -- can't stop this from happening -- hauch -- neither of us can...
Very well. If you want a fight, so be it. But know this. I could have killed you today. Tomorrow I shall not be so kind.
As the Hellspawn rides off, the thunder peal of horse hooves echoing through the mountains, portents of clashing swords to come.
There is no turning back now.
The green grass of the valley, the white chalk of the hills and the clear crystal of the rivers, by tomorrow, will all be painted red.

Hear me, Oh Lord, in my darkest hour. Let not my sins be the undoing of others. Send forth an escort from thy heavenly shores...
Hark! The sparrow calls from yonder knoll. I shall descend and snatch a soul!
From dawn of time it has been my right, to... uh .. traffic betwixt both day and night. Yes!
Do not look so surprised, my darling. You must have known I would come for you.
Boo! Hissss Boo! Boo!
What is this?
The maiden Meave's downfall, of course. trafficking with the Devil! Please, I thought you were "there."
This is wrong.

Such a kind and beauteous... uh... thing you are. So pure and well- made. Your fertile field has yield up such um... apples of temptation.
And, um, rather fine apples they are! Heh.
You are Eden reborn, and once again I shall undo Paradise...
But what is this? My hand shrinks from her bosom! She is too pure! It is I who am undone!!
To think that I, the Father of Lies, have led her to her doom, only to have my prize --
Enough!

I said enough! This is a lie! This is an insult.
What- what are you doing! Are you mad!
Sit down you great lummox. You're ruining the show!
What is going on! Stop it! Damn it!

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Good sir, please... we mean no offense. This is but a jest, a mere diversion. There is no harm in it.
Although, you are free, of course, to disagree.
Get out!
Get out, all of you. This pageant of lies will not continue. The show is over! Go!
Well, this show has taken an unexpected turn.
He's good. I quite like the shouting. Good shouter.

His blood seethes with anger. Anger at the travesty he has witnessed, anger at the fools who applaud such slanders...
And anger at himself for a wrong he cannot never right.
Lies! Lies! It is all lies! you don't understand! none of you!
Right. That's enough I think.
Get outta my way!
I want my bloody money back!

Alone among the ruins of make-believe, among a sea of tattered curtains and sundered backdrops, the cruel ghost of memory haunts the Hellspawn's heart.
There are some wounds wich will never heal.
They don't understand. That's not how it happened.

DARKNESS